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ABSTRACT

Designed to encourage college administrators to place greater priority on faculty evaluation, this report provides an overview of the processes and outcomes of faculty evaluation and examines its relationship to faculty development and instructional improvement. Introductory comments recognize the lack of emphasis generally placed on faculty evaluation, and urge administrators to learn more about the process and give it higher priority. After warning of the likelihood of faculty resistance to sudden administrative interest in their performance, the paper suggests ways of allaying faculty concerns and dealing with instructors as professionals. A list of instructor activities that should be evaluated is followed by a review of the literature on five methods of evaluation: i.e., evidence of learning or learning outcomes; peer evaluation; student evaluation; self-evaluation; and administrative or supervisory evaluation. Next, the paper examines administrator responsibilities for each of the five interrelated components of faculty evaluation: (1) a pre-conference with the faculty member; (2) data collection through classroom observation, student ratings, peer- and self-appraisals, and grade distribution sheets; (3) a post-conference; (4) a plan for improvement (if necessary); and (5) a follow-up report. Concluding comments highlight the benefits that can result from effective faculty devlopment programs. (LAL)

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Management Report

1984-5/3

EVALUATING AND DEVELOPING COMMUNITY COLLEGE FACULTY

BY

GEORGE BOGGS
BUTTE COLLEGE

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FOREWORD

At a time when finance and politics dominate the community college scene in California, it is refreshing to be reminded that our central concern is teaching and learning. The extent to which we succeed as institutions depends directly on our ability to administer these processes. Yet all too often, faculty evaluation--like so many other "routine" responsibilities--falls to the bottom of our priority lists.

In the following Management Report, George Boggs recognizes the dangers of this dilemma and calls for community college administrators to learn more about faculty evaluation and to give it a higher priority. To assist us along the way, he presents an unusually comprehensive treatment of the subject, well grounded in recent references and carefully connected to faculty development and improvement of instruction.

Ray Liedlich
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Dr. Boggs has taught classes in natural science at the community college level since 1968 and served as an administrator since 1981. He has published a number of articles, including one entitled "Faculty Evaluation," which appeared in the Fall 1983 issue of Community College Review.

EVALUATING AND DEVELOPING COMMUNITY COLLEGE FACULTY

Introduction

Most people share a desire to know the answer to the question, "How am I doing?" They want to know what is expected of them, how well they are meeting the expectations, and how they can improve. Process motivation theories emphasize the importance of feedback to the individual, while content or substantive theories speak of esteem, respect, recognition, and achievement.

Despite what we know about human behavior and individual change, faculty members are most often treated the same regardless of performance. Salary schedules, for example, usually are based upon longevity rather than merit. Incompetence is often tolerated, and sometimes rewarded. The clear message to faculty is that effort and quality are not valued by the institution. They often believe rewards are reserved for those who don't "rock the boat."

College administrators, on the other hand, often work overtime just to keep up with meetings, class schedule and budget development, and the usual crises which find their way to us. Instructor evaluation is not frequently at the top of our list of priorities. Very often, performance appraisals are perfunctory and done more to satisfy an article in the board policy manual or collective bargaining agreement than to provide meaningful feedback to the employee. Moreover, administrators are generally not trained as evaluators. Evaluators must be skilled in writing objectives and goals, communicating interpersonally, utilizing evaluation instruments, interpreting

evaluation data, developing alternatives for staff improvement, and writing evaluation reports (Norris, 1980). Having been a good instructor does not, in itself, qualify an administrator to be a competent evaluator.

Nonetheless, administrators must come to realize that instructor evaluation is one of our most important functions. A competent, up-to-date, and excited teaching staff can make the difference between excellence and mediocrity in an institution. Instructors perform best when expectations are known. Motivation and job satisfaction are strongly related to achievement which is recognized by others (Thomas, 1980). Perhaps it is time for us to make room in our busy schedules to learn more about faculty evaluation and to give it a higher priority.

Faculty Resistance

While faculty members are often quick to point to a lack of administrative concern for quality, they are usually wary of any sudden interest in their performance. Instructor evaluation remains a sensitive area. The instructor's status and future are being tested or reinforced with each evaluation (Norris, 1980). To reduce faculty apprehensions about the process, they must be involved in developing an effective program (Harrell, 1982; Miller, 1974). Anxiety can be minimized by agreeing that the primary intent of evaluation must be to help the teacher become more successful. Only when the teacher obviously cannot or will not respond to suggestions for improvement should that purpose change (O'Hanlon & Mortensen, 1980).

It is important to remember, in dealing with faculty, that they are professionals. That is, they work independently of colleagues and supervisors, but closely with the students they serve. They have been highly educated or trained to do their jobs, and they exercise considerable control over their own work (Mintzberg, 1979). Community college faculty are independent, inner-directed people who must arrive at ideas for themselves and who need to create their own processes and solutions (Hert, 1984). It would be a mistake to ignore these characteristics when designing or implementing any faculty evaluation process.

Usually high on the list of faculty concerns is the extent to which the evaluation procedure will be used to improve instruction (formative process) versus its use in making personnel decisions (summative process) (Armiger, 1982; O'Hanlon & Mortensen, 1980). Available data suggest, however, that a majority of faculty favor a formal evaluation procedure which includes observations by students, colleagues, and department chairs. Most will even agree that this information should be used in making personnel decisions (Miller, 1972).

Activities to Include

Many areas of faculty responsibility could, and probably should, be evaluated: classroom teaching, advising, institutional service (including committee work), publications, performances, public services, and research. Of course, the emphasis should be on teaching performance and related activities, but we should not ignore other important faculty contributions. Materials development, equipment and facility

maintenance, community service, and professional development are worthy activities. Evaluation instruments should allow for review and comment in these areas also.

Methods of Evaluation

Because supervisors, teachers, and students view the teaching-learning process from different perspectives, a procedure should include multiple approaches to evaluation (Norris, 1980). The most frequently used methods are: (1) evidence of learning (learning outcomes), (2) peer evaluation, (3) student evaluation, (4) self-evaluation, and (5) administrative (supervisory) evaluation (O'Hanlon & Mortensen, 1980). If several methods are implemented, the strength of one can balance the limitation of the others. It is important, however, to develop a procedure which is not an overkill in terms of professional time (Miller, 1974).

Evidence of Learning

It is hard to believe that student attainment of objectives could be disputed as a legitimate method of evaluating instruction. However, one measure of student attainment, that of standardized test results, is being hotly debated. The NEA, largest of the faculty unions, is calling for an end to standardized testing and opposes the use of any measures of student progress to evaluate teacher competencies (Millman, 1981). Basic to this argument is the belief that such forms of evaluation ignore the fact that the student is an active participant in the educational process (King, 1981). Students differ widely in many

ways that affect learning. Teacher groups contend that these differences and other factors, such as overcrowded classrooms and early morning or late evening class schedules, affect student learning in ways that are beyond the teacher's control (Millman, 1981). This results-oriented method of evaluting teacher effectiveness views student learning as though the teacher were the sole cause of student growth, or non-growth (Kimball, 1980). Schriven carries this argument even further. His premise is that a teacher's task is to provide the best learning environment, not to guarantee effective results (1981).

To be sure, there are many factors which affect student achievement and persistence. Conventional wisdom would indicate that effective teaching should be a significant contributor. In fact, despite all of the reasons given by students for leaving college, increased student retention is likely to be an indicator of more and better teaching in the classrooms (Noel, 1978). The results of a recent study done by the ACT National Center for the Advancement of Educational Practices reveal that the most important factor affecting student persistence is the institution's degree of success in individualizing instruction and focusing it on relevant, practical skill-building (Forrest, 1982). Certainly, it is the instructor who most directly influences these dimensions. Moreover, Wilson et al., in their study of college professors and their impact on students, have identified teacher characteristics that make a difference in student and faculty perceptions of faculty effectiveness (1975).

Standardized examinations are not the only measure of evidence of learning. Madgic (1980) points out that student products are often

overlooked, but valuable in evaluating teacher performance. Products include papers, projects, essays, and performances. Obvious examples are in the performance areas of art, band, choir, drama, and athletics.

The controversy over the use of student achievement data in evaluations is, no doubt, due to the perceived summative intent. If we can view student performance data with the objective of improving instruction rather than judging it, the threat should be diminished. In fact, data on evidence of student learning are too valuable to discard. Follow-up data on past students which indicate the degree of success in employment, further education, and licensing examinations should be of critical interest to those who evaluate instruction. Abnormal trends in student retention or grade distributions might indicate a problem that deserves administrative attention.

Peer Evaluation

Although peer review has been widely used in the evaluation of research, its role in evaluating teaching has been largely ignored (French-Lazovik, 1981). In fact, faculty often resist peer observation (O'Hanlon & Mortensen, 1980). Although there has been little or no research into the reasons for this reluctance, one might expect it to be based upon the possible intimidating environment of performing before a colleague. Another limitation to the use of colleagues in the evaluation process is that they often have a protective bias (Centra, 1977, pp. 93-106; O'Hanlon & Mortensen, 1980). Moreover, earlier comments made about lack of training in evaluation techniques for administrators would apply for faculty as well.

Perhaps the most appropriate area of colleague involvement is in the evaluation of course materials, such as course outlines, syllabi, examinations, texts, reading lists, study guides, assignments, and other handout material (O'Hanlon & Mortensen, 1980). Colleagues can comment on organization, methodology, currency of materials, appropriateness of course goals, content, and grading procedures. It should be noted, however, that peer judgments made without the protection of anonymity lack both reliability and validity (French-Lazovik, 1981). If peer review is absent, as is often the case in community colleges, administrators should consult with knowledgeable faculty coordinators or department chairs when a weakness in subject matter competence or in course organization is suspected.

Student Evaluation

Student ratings provide the most important systematically collected data for evaluating college teaching (Greenwood & Ramagli, 1980). The data are easy to obtain, students observe every class, and teachers respond to student criticism with change (Centra, 1973; Centra, 1977, pp. 93-106; O'Hanlon & Mortensen, 1980).

Although the validity of student evaluations is not universally accepted, they have as much support as other procedures (Greenwood & Ramagli, 1980). Nevertheless, some practices threaten validity. Student ratings are higher, for example, when the instructor is present (Miller, 1972). Validity is affected by allowing too little time for thoughtful comments by respondents, by administering the forms immediately after an examination when attitudes may interfere with

objectivity, or by a teacher's failing to support the process. Students must believe their input will have an impact (O'Hanlon & Mortensen, 1980).

Students usually rate the following teacher behaviors as important to their ability to learn (Miller, 1972):

1. Being well prepared for class;
2. Establishing a sincere interest in the subject being taught;
3. Being fair and reasonable to students in evaluation procedures;
4. Demonstrating a comprehensive knowledge of his or her subject;
5. Using teaching methods which enable students to achieve the course objectives;
6. Communicating effectively at levels appropriate to the preparedness of students;
7. Constructing tests which search for understanding on the part of students rather than for rote memory ability;
8. Organizing the course in a logical fashion;
9. Acknowledging all questions to the best of his or her ability;
10. Treating all students with respect;
11. Encouraging intelligent independent thought by students; and
12. Motivating students to do their best.

Faculty members are usually anxious to see how students rate them on these behaviors. When systematic student evaluations are not conducted, many instructors issue questionnaires on their own.

In view of the increasing ratio of part-time instructors to supervisors in community colleges, a systematic program for collecting student evaluations may be the only way all teachers can be evaluated. Computerized and even standardized evaluation instruments are available. The data can be quickly tabulated and can be very helpful in identifying problem areas which need further administrative attention.

Self-Evaluation

It is rare to find self-appraisal in use in any organized fashion in education today. Nonetheless, this form of evaluation should not be passed over too quickly. Studies show that one is most likely to act on data one collects oneself (O'Hanlon & Mortensen, 1980). A significant improvement in subsequent student ratings frequently occurs after a moderate discrepancy has been identified between student ratings and the instructor's self-rating (Carroll, 1981; Centra, 1973, Centra, 1977, pp 93-106).

The main limitation to this method is that instructors tend to rate themselves higher than do students or peers (O'Hanlon & Mortensen, 1980). The validity of these data would certainly be questionable in any summative process. One's objectivity can be questioned when one's teaching career hangs in the balance (Carroll, 1981).

Technology has provided a means of increasing the objectivity of self-evaluation through the use of the videotape recorder. Instructors

can view themselves as students see them. However, unless a supervisor or colleague views the tape with the teacher to provide a focus on behavior, instructors often become preoccupied with the more superficial and cosmetic aspects of their teaching. Feedback that is not accompanied by focus has been found to change behavior little, if at all (Carroll, 1981; Centra, 1977, pp. 93-106). Taping of classroom behavior can be intimidating and should not be used unless an instructor agrees with its use. The emphasis should be formative.

Administrative Evaluation

Like other approaches to evaluation of teaching, the validity of the classroom observation is debated. Schriven says that classroom visitations are not just incorrect, but a disgrace. His contention is that the visit alters the teaching, the number of visits are too few to provide an accurate sample, and visitors are too biased to evaluate objectively (Schriven, 1981). A growing body of research indicates, not surprisingly, that the presence of an observer does affect normal teaching behavior. If this is true, data collected during an observation are not truly representative of an instructor's behavior, and an evaluation report may describe teacher behavior that exists only during an observation. Much of the research indicates that the teacher's affective behavior is the area most influenced by the presence of an observer. Usually, more positive affective behavior is observed during the visit (McIntyre, 1980).

Nonetheless, there is a positive correlation between evaluations by administrators based upon classroom observation and student and

colleague ratings (O'Hanlon & Mortensen, 1980). Moreover, the classroom observation gives administrators a view of the climate, rapport, interaction, and function of the classroom available from no other source (Evertson & Holley, 1980; Haefele, 1981). The administrative evaluation process can increase communication with the faculty; the clear message is that administrators care about instructional quality.

Administrative Responsibility

Effective faculty evaluation requires trained supervisory personnel who have the time to perform their roles as evaluators. Anyone who has examined the teaching act closely realizes that it is an extremely complex set of behaviors (Norris, 1980). Effective evaluation of these behaviors is no less complex. It is important to emphasize that care must be taken to maintain objectivity. Evaluators must be aware of biases due to previous performance data or personal relationships with the instructor. The evaluator must also guard against judging teacher performance in terms of favored methods of style.

Evaluation of instructors requires five interrelated components: (1) a pre-conference, (2) data collection (classroom observation, student ratings, peer and self appraisals, grade distribution sheets), (3) a post-conference, (4) a plan for improvement (if necessary), and (5) a follow-up report (Norris, 1980).

The Pre-Conference

A pre-conference is an informal meeting between the supervisor and the instructor which deals with lesson plans, objectives, and planned activities for the period of the observation. It also provides an opportunity for the supervisor to be sure the instructor knows the purpose of the evaluation and an opportunity for the instructor to complete a short self-appraisal check sheet.

While some evaluators might argue that a pre-conference only serves to give the instructor enough notice to do an unusually good job during the observation, it should be remembered that the very presence of the observer in the classroom will result in somewhat atypical behavior. On the other hand, the pre-conference greatly reduces the threatening aspect of evaluations. Both the teacher and the administrator, then, have some idea of what to expect during the observation (Boggs, 1983).

Data Collection

While some types of data collection procedures (student ratings, peer and self appraisals) may be more difficult to establish and maintain, classroom observation is the most difficult to do well. It is not mere looking; it is an active, systematic, and purposeful process which requires an observer to be intellectually alert and continuously analytical (Griffith, 1973). What goes on in the classroom should be related to the objectives discussed in the pre-conference.

There are many methods which have been developed to record data on classroom behavior. Frequency count systems record the frequency of

a certain behavior or event. Category systems record certain behaviors, events, or interactions each time they occur during the period (Evertson & Holley, 1981). Some interaction analysis systems record teacher or student verbal behavior at certain pre-determined periods of time (Griffith, 1973). The rating system, probably the most common, requires the observer to rate the degree to which a certain variable is present. In using the narrative system, the observer records classroom behavior as it occurs.

If done properly, the narrative system provides the richest source of useful data. Its advantage is that it is more natural and provides for a holistic perspective (Evertson & Holley, 1981). It can also provide valuable back-up data for ratings. Using the narrative system requires constant attention to teacher and student behavior and constant recording of observations. The goal of the observer is to record as much data as possible regarding these interactive behaviors.

Teacher behavior. Did the instructor start the class on time; minimize time spent on procedural matters; and appear self-confident, enthusiastic, and well prepared? Did the instructor adequately address the objectives discussed in the pre-observation conference in a logical, interesting, and easily understood fashion? Did the instructor emphasize key points; make clear assignments; encourage, listen to, and respond to student questions; stimulate student participation; and treat students fairly as to ethnic origin and gender? Did the instructor call on students by name? Did the instructor display any distracting traits?

Student behavior. Are the students present, attentive, taking notes, and displaying affective behavior to indicate they are receiving

the material? Do they seem to feel free to ask questions and make comments?

Student opinion. Additional data which can prove to be valuable can be recorded if the evaluator reserves the last ten to fifteen minutes of the period for direct interaction with the students in the absence of the instructor. Even if written student appraisals are available, this procedure is valuable in assessing the opinions of students regarding the course and the instructor. Students are surprisingly candid, and the group interaction can provide useful insights for the evaluator.

The evaluator must be sure to explain to the students the purpose of the visit, and then carefully record the student responses to questions. Was today's class a typical one? If not, in what respect was it different? Does the instructor seem to know the material? Is the instructor well organized? Are assignments clear? Were the objectives of the course made clear to the students? Are the presentations interesting? Are the presentations logical and well organized? Do the students get a chance to participate in the class? Does the instructor seem to enjoy teaching? Do the students know what is expected of them in the class? Do the students feel put down for asking questions? Are examinations a fair test of what the students are learning? Are they graded fairly? Are they returned promptly? Do corrections include helpful comments? Are there essay components on the examinations? Is the instructor available for out-of-class consultations? Is the textbook thorough and understandable? Have the films that the students have seen during the term been valuable? What

suggestions would the students make to the instructor to improve the course?

These types of questions will usually succeed in bringing about student response. Often the evaluator will have to ask specific follow-up questions in some areas. Students should be invited to talk to the evaluator in private if they have concerns they would rather not share with the rest of the class (Boggs, 1983).

The report. The data collection phase should culminate in the written report. The report should be based upon data collected and should relate to the pre-conference discussion. The evaluator should be clear and concise. The evaluation report should not dwell on the trivial and should not include sweeping generalizations or opinions not based upon the data; it should be specific and constructive.

The Post-Conference

Following the written evaluation report, a post-observation conference should be scheduled. Preparation by both parties is essential. The written report should be reviewed by the instructor before the meeting. Discussion should be purposeful, addressing the evaluation and any recommendations. The atmosphere should be non-threatening. The emphasis should be on problem-solving, and the outcome should be improved teaching (Griffith, 1973).

Improvement Plans

The most logical product of the post-conference is a plan for improvement. The obvious link between faculty evaluation and faculty

development has been receiving some recent attention (Brock, 1981; Centra, 1977, pp. 49-56; Harrell, 1982). Hammons (1983) argues further that faculty development is a necessary corollary to faculty evaluation. In practice, he says, each is likely to fail unless accompanied by the other.

The idea of prescriptive faculty development itself is not new, however. Improvement or contract plans have been a part of good evaluation systems for some time (Iwanicki, 1981; Norris, 1980). This procedure is an effective technique to improve teacher performance through a professional development program tailored to the needs of the individual instructor. The instructor and evaluator should work cooperatively to identify priority areas for improvement. Performance objectives or expectations should be developed for each priority (Iwanicki, 1981). Improvement plans could include formal coursework, workshops, conferences, videotaping, observation of colleagues, team assignments, or reassignments (Norris, 1980).

Linking instructor evaluation and staff development promotes professional growth by correcting weaknesses and enhancing strengths. It fosters a positive working relationship between the teacher and the evaluator while focusing on the teacher's professional growth. It clarifies performance expectations and sets explicit evaluation criteria (Iwanicki, 1981).

Follow-Up Report

Of course, the process is not complete until the impact of the improvement plan on teacher performance is itself evaluated. Was the

plan seriously implemented, and did it improve what it was designed to improve? In order to answer these questions, the evaluator and instructor must return to the first steps of the five interrelated components of an effective faculty evaluation program: a pre-con erence and data collection.

The evaluation process then, is a never-ending cycle. Perhaps a spiral would be a better analogy. With each turn, we should expect a higher level of competence and self-confidence. For some instructors, the cycle may be more rapid than for others, but the goals are always the same: increased instructor motivation, increased job satisfaction, and increased instructional quality.

Conclusion

Despite what we know about employee motivation and job satisfaction, most colleges do not place a high priority on faculty evaluation. Administrators avoid this important responsibility because they lack the necessary time to do it right, and they are not well trained to do the job. Furthermore, unless they are treated as professionals and involved in developing the process, faculty will often resist evaluation.

Yet, those instructional leaders who manage effective faculty evaluation programs which are integrated with prescriptive and dynamic faculty development report that it can be done. In fact, they have found that the process has positively affected the working relationship between instructors and supervisors. The goal is, of course, a noble one--to increase the quality of instruction, thereby improving student achievement.

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